

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

*Please amend the abstract submitted with the Amendment and Rely
submitted on March 24, 2008 as follows:*

A process for the preparation of beads having a crosslinked inorganic matrix with a size controlled in the millimeter range, which comprises pouring a suspension comprising a precursor of the inorganic matrix and an alginate drop wise into a solution of a polyvalent cation salt[[,]] ~~to obtain a reaction medium, wherein the reaction medium has~~ with a pH of less than 3, ~~to obtain a reaction medium, in which the alginate gels,~~ and crosslinking the precursor of the inorganic matrix by a sol-gel process.